joining owner three months before commencing the same; and that such notice should be in the form No. 14, in the schedule M, to the Metropolitan Buildings Act annexed, or to the like effect, specifying therein the kind of operation intended; but that if a survey of the wall be required, then such notice should contain an intimation that the building owner intends to have such wall surveyed pursuant to the statute, and that he has given notice to the district surveyor to survey the premises for the purpose of certifying the circumstances and condition of such wall, and whether the proposed operation may or may not be done; and if it may be done, in what manner it ought to be done. And we are of opinion that every such notice should contain such particulars as to the nature, extent, situation, and purpose of the proposed operations, as would enable the adjoining owner to consider the same with regard to the stability of the party-wall, and the security of his premises."

We are unable to discover on what grounds the referees came to this decision, which is likely to cause much unnecessary hindrance and inconvenience.

ANCIENT LIGHTS IN PARTY WALLS.

The Marylebone district surveyor having received notice from Mr. J. H. Edwards, the building owner of No. 80, Oxford-street, on the 26th day of December last, proceeded to view the wall to the line of junction between No. 80 in Oxford-street, and No. 79, in the same street, and certified to the official referees, amongst other points, that the wall was a party-wall and was ruinous, so far as the line of the back front of No. 80, and 4 feet further, and ought to be rebuilt; and if rebuilt, should be rebuilt at the joint expense of the owners of the two buildings, and beyond that distance northward requires to be amended as to the eaves of No. 79, and in two several places where *there are windows or openings therein*.

Further, that no compensation should be made by either the building owner or the adjoining owner, the one to the other, for lessening either of the said buildings by the party-wall about to be constructed, nor for any other injury, unless it could be shewn that the windows hereinbefore referred to had been in existence twenty years, or that the said projecting eaves had been of equal duration; in the first of which cases, viz., that respecting the windows, he certified that fifty-pounds was a fair equivalent for the loss thereof, the same to be paid by the building owner to the adjoining owner.

The adjoining owner appealed against this certificate on various grounds, setting forth that it could be proved that the said two window openings were ancient lights, having existed since the year 1818, and that in consequence, the northern portion of the said party-wall beyond the 4 feet further than the present line of the back front not having been condemned or condemnable, it was submitted that the work proposed to be done, so far as the same affected the northern portion of the said party-wall, ought not to be done if the performance of it interfered with the said lights. And further, that the district surveyor had not the power to award compensation for stopping up ancient lights or for directing such ancient lights to be stopped up, particularly as the portion of the party-wall containing such ancient lights was not condemned or condemnable under the said Act.

At the hearing, the district surveyor contended, in defence of his certificate, that the whole of the wall except the part containing the openings was condemned for structural defects, and the latter part on account of its having such openings, which, in his opinion, made it inefficient as a party-wall. Mr. Jas. Lockyer, on the part of the adjoining owner, contended that a sound party-wall was not condemnable solely on account of openings therein, and that such had been held to be the law under the statute 14 Geo. III., cap. 78, and that by the statute (2 and 3 Will. IV., cap. 71), for shortening the time of prescription in certain cases, the parties had acquired a right to the openings and could not be deprived of them; and further, that the deprivation of lights was not a matter contemplated by the 24th section of the Metropolitan Buildings Act; and that if it was, the amount of compensation provided in the said certificate was not adequate. On the part of the building owner, it was urged in reply, that the wall, not being condemnable for structural defects was an unimportant consideration, as the building owner had the right to rebuild a sound party-wall upon paying all expenses, and in that case a wall with lights might be rebuilt without such lights, although sound.

The referees decided, with regard to that portion of the said wall which extends from the front, so far as the line of the back front of the said house and premises No. 80 and 4 feet further, that the work specified in the said certificate of the district surveyor was proper to be done, and so far they confirmed the certificate. With regard to the two lights, they determined "that if the said Willoughby Methley [the adjoining owner] be lawfully entitled to the lights in question (and having regard to the statute hereinbefore referred to for shortening the time of prescription in certain cases, we consider that he is so entitled), the district surveyor, as such surveyor, has no power to direct such openings or lights to be stopped up; but that the space before the two windows from the level of the underside of the sill of the lower of such two windows upwards, is of the nature of intermixed property, and that the said James Hurd Edwards must in building against the said wall and under such windows, construct a party arch or arches, or a floor formed of proper and sufficient incombustible materials, in accordance with the rules of the first-mentioned Act in that behalf, as a covering to any building so to be built as a separation of such intermixed property; and further, that if the said Willoughby Methley be not lawfully entitled to the lights in question, the said surveyor has no power to award compensation to the said Willoughby Methley, for the stopping up the said windows, but such windows ought to be stopped up as defects in the said wall, which it is incumbent upon the said James Hurd Edwards to amend in building against and using such wall, in the part in which such windows occur as a party-wall; and lastly, we do by this our award, authorize the pulling down and rebuilding of the first-mentioned portion of the said wall to be proceeded with by the said James Hurd Edwards, the building owner, as if the consent of the adjoining owner or owners had been obtained."

THE THOROUGH IMPROVEMENT OF LONDON.

SIR,—The formation of new streets, the widening and improving of old ones, and the opening up of narrow courts and alleys, may be regarded as beneficial not only for the convenience of traffic, and in an architectural point of view, but also in connection with the improvement of the sanitary condition of the inhabitants. It is this latter position that I would wish to press more particularly upon the attention of that excellent body of men our "Sanitary Reformers," who, while labouring in the good cause of the improvement of our huge metropolis, have almost overlooked this absolutely necessary measure, or to say the least, have not assigned it that conspicuous place in their category which its importance deserves. I can only account for this (apathy I might almost call it) in one way, and it is this, that hitherto the formation of new lines of streets has had a bad effect, in one respect, upon our poorer neighbours, by overcrowding the localities through which they pass. That this has been and is now the case all must admit; but if the comprehensive scheme which I now advocate were properly carried out it would not again occur, as it would be a fundamental principle in every instance, to encourage the investment of money in the erection of wholesome dwellings for the labouring classes, by providing suitable sites at moderate rents as an inducement to companies and private individuals to supply the want which would be created by the destruction of such numbers of the houses of the poor. If this were made a paramount consideration, the inconvenience, if any, sustained by the masses, would be very temporary, and in exchange for their present unwholesome undrained habitations, they would obtain houses fit to live in at perhaps a less rent and in airy and well-drained situations. As to convenience of traffic, any one who has been in the habit of riding, driving, or even walking through the streets of London, must be fully aware of the necessity which exists for new lines of thoroughfare in every direction. It is the crowded state of our streets which enables the steam-boats to compete so successfully with the omnibusses, and it is becoming quite notorious that a person may walk through the city in the middle of the day in less time than he can ride, and in consequence of the immense traffic, both road and footways are continually requiring repair, which makes the matter still worse.

Perhaps it might be here objected, that we already possess what I have been contending for, viz., a "Metropolitan Improvement Commission;" but any one who has read my two former letters will at once perceive, that although there is a government commission with that name, yet they have neither the power nor the means to carry out what is really wanted. That they have not the power, is evident, from their being obliged to apply to Parliament for an "Act" to enable them to carry out every new line of street that they decide upon from time to time, and also from their stopping short whenever they come to the City, as if they dared not venture into the very part of London which requires improvement more than any other. And that they have not the means, is shewn by their over-parsimoniousness in carrying out their projects. If this were not the case, New Oxford-street would have been considerably wider than it is; Endell-street would not have been, as it is, a mere widening of an old crooked lane; and the opening from Long-acre to Coventry-street would have been more direct. A reference also to the report of the commission respecting the intended park at Battersea will pretty clearly shew this.

One of the effects which may be traced to the present inefficient means for the improvement of London, or rather the want of efficient means for that purpose, is the application to Parliament of the inhabitants of several parts of London for powers to carry out *piecemeal* that which ought to form part of one great whole, and be carried out as such.

With a government commission whose efforts are cramped by want of sufficient funds and want of sufficient power, and several other distinct bodies, none of whom are acting in concert, a satisfactory result cannot ever be expected; and (in my humble opinion) it is only by some such means as I propose, viz., one directing body, with a spice of the energy which our railway directors display—and with a well-digested and considered plan, and the power and the means to carry out such a plan in a certain period (say eight or ten years at the utmost), that we can ever hope to make our metropolis keep pace with its trade or with its extent; by its facilities for traffic, by its healthiness, or by its architectural elegance; or make it deserve its title of the "Metropolis of the World," as much by the three latter qualifications as it does at present by the two former. As to the city corporation "Improvement Committee," their whole system is so radically bad that, although many of its members are men of business habits, the only remedy I can propose is its entire abolishment, and the application of the funds at its disposal to the "general scheme" of the proposed new improvement commission, who could then act without respect to what London used to be two or three hundred years ago, merely regarding it as it at present exists; and of course all other existing bodies of the same nature would be likewise superseded or merged into the single "improvement commission." At present, the common council of the "City," a portion of whom form the "Improvement Committee" are elected annually, so that nearly a quarter of the year is lost after the elections before the committee is chosen, and get into working order; and, as they only meet once a month, just as they get into the routine of the business, round comes St. Thomas's-day again, and the members of the committee are changed, so that it is not likely they can take much interest in the thing when their power lasts so short a time. Besides, their meetings being only monthly, the business has to stand over long before it comes before them, and hence arises the delay and consequent waste of the public money and injury to the neighbourhood, which characterise all their operations. One very prominent case in point your readers will no doubt remember, viz., the widening of Fetter-lane, where one house was allowed to remain for some years after the houses on both side-

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